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THE CEA CRITIC

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What Are The Fundamentals?

(A condensation of a paper before the Middle Atlantic Group of the College English Association, at U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, April 21, 1956.)

— — I must tell you at the outset that the Fundamentals have not changed. For us it is all too true that Johnny can't read! nor think! nor write! And that it is our job to teach him. After a good deal of soul-searching I have resolved the Fundamentals into a simple pattern of three: Faith, Hope, and Charity, and I shall draw upon my experience to tell you why.

Faith

The first Fundamental is faith - faith in what we are trying to do. We must believe with heart and soul that the Freshman Course in Composition is the most important course in the entire college curriculum. We must proselyte our colleagues in other departments until by exacting standards of decent English from their students they come to see, as we do, that composition and communication can help in mastering any subject.

We must hammer away at Administrators until we convince them that a teaching load of nine hours of composition is the equivalent of fourteen hours of Literature or History or eighteen hours of Mathematics, and until they assign the best teachers on the faculty to help us in our work. And when we face our students we must convince them, too, of the practical value of communicating ideas in correct and cogent English; we must prove to them that the course we teach is the most important course they will ever take.

Here at the Academy we have the word of Admiral Nimitz that our department offers the most valuable professional course at this institution. All of us have the evidence available from the various meetings of our colleagues in CEA with the representatives of industry in that invaluable branch activity successfully sponsored by Max Goldberg. We must have faith ourselves and we must convince our students about the practical and professional value of the Freshman course.

Hope

The second Fundamental is hope - hope that the means we use will help us achieve the recognized ends. These may be summed up as follows: (1) Don't try to teach composition inductively by trying to teach students how to write by having them read. There is no substitute for writing and re-writing. (2) Don't require the memorizing of rules. Excellence in Grammar or Syntax is no assurance of power of expression.

(3) Don't neglect to teach the tools of exposition separately. Students must learn how to handle each expository process separately before they can master the structural art of building a composition. . . . . .

Charity

And the final Fundamental is charity. Don't try to teach Communications, or Linguistics, or English - 1, or Composition, or Rhetoric; try to teach human beings. The most important single foundation for a successful freshman course is to establish a relationship between the instructor and the individual student which is founded on mutual respect. The student must value his instructor for what he knows and for his ability to help. The instructor must play fair in giving equal time to the oaf and to the genius. He must overlook the shortcomings, the slowness, the stupidity, and sympathize with the flounderings, the first hesitant steps, the occasional winged aspirations. For we are teachers and the teacher's best work is helping to make better men and women. If we try to do that and succeed we do just about the best thing that our country, our society, and our profession expect of us.

Allen Blow Cook
United States Naval Academy

CEA National Sessions
Washington, D.C.
December 28
Program: 3:45-5:15 p.m.
East Room, The Mayflower
Social Hour and Dinner:
5:15-7:00 p.m.
Chinese Room, The Mayflower
Annual Business Meeting:
7:00-8:00 p.m.
Chinese Room, The Mayflower
December 29
Breakfast and Program for "Regionals": 8:30-9:45,
Ohio Room, The Statler

The Emperor Jones And Aristotle

(Paper read at an Indiana CEA meeting.)

The Emperor Jones would seem at first sight to be pretty well removed from the Aristotelian tragic tradition. It ends, of course, in the destruction of the principal character, but it contains what appear to be wide departures from the canon of classical tragedy. It is a strange play. Yet in its effect upon readers or spectators it comes nearer, I believe, to performing the function of tragedy according to Aristotle than one might expect a play with such characters, such action, and such technique as O'Neill's to do.

This is a short play. Some of the development occurs before the play opens, in the antecedent action. The story has, nevertheless, the "certain magnitude" prescribed by Aristotle; it is an action of sufficient length to develop the rise of the hero to the height of his fortune, to engage the sympathies of the spectators, and to let them participate in the emotions of his defeat and destruction. It has its beginning, its middle, and its end.

The Emperor Jones is the agent of his own disaster because of one fatal error in judgment, his miscalculation of the temper of his subjects and of his own prowess, an error which he discovers at the opening of the play. Only the last part of the story, the falling action, is presented in the play itself. But if that part of the action is enough to enable the spectator to merge himself in the Emperor, and if in that sympathy with the latter he reads not his own impending misfortunes or those of a spirit alien to his own but something of the "doubtful doom of human kind," then it is enough to induce at least in some degree the **katharsis** of pity and fear which is the essence of the tragic spectacle.

But does the action induce this pity and fear? Is Brutus Jones, Pullman porter, crap-game killer, murderer of a chain-gang overseer, ruler of the ignorant natives

(Please Turn To Page 6)

TEN PERCENT FOR ENGLISH

Recently, a large state university decided to eliminate remedial courses in English. The thirty percent of its entering class that was not up to college English would have to sink or swim in the regular freshman courses. The belief of the administrators that colleges should not be teaching high school English is probably shared by most English teachers throughout the United States. High school graduates should certainly be capable of writing clear, grammatically correct sentences.

We Are to Blame

But I wonder if much of the responsibility for the inadequate secondary school training should not be assumed by college professors. They, after all, taught English to the secondary school teachers and are teaching the future teachers. Inadequate training in the essentials of writing is in part due to the negative attitude of high school English teachers toward the mechanics of writing, and that attitude was developed, to a great extent, in their college composition courses. Their impatience with the mechanics of written expression merely reflects the impatience of their college professors. And these professors are not unique. They share with most of their colleagues throughout the nation the feeling that they are wasting their talents and their time by teaching writing rather than literature.

Techniques Are Needed!

The ultimate source of this negative attitude can probably be traced to the type of person who becomes an English teacher, hign school or college. He is, or was when he started to teach, a worshipper at the altar of art. At some time during his life he responded to the enchantment of literature and became a devotee. Usually, at some time, also, he tried to be a writer and discovered that he was not among the chosen. His experience as a practitioner of the art, unfortunately, was limited, and he did not fully realize that something more than talent and inspiration produce great writing.

He failed to recognize that writing is a skill, a difficult, demanding craft. His interest is, therefore, mainly confined to what we may call the spirit of literature. He loves to interpret, to explore the

(Please Turn To Page 6)

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Mich. CEA Praised

An editorial in the Detroit Teacher for April 16, 1956, entitled "Integrity Winning Out," discusses the work of the Detroit Federation of Teachers in opposing the proposed revision of the Michigan Teacher Certification Code. The following passage in the editorial is set in bold type:

"The Michigan College English Association, in particular, from which the Federation obtained its first knowledge of the revisions, never ceased in its keen analysis of the proceedings."

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Jibberings of an Old Ghost

Perhaps I am drawing upon imagination and wishful thinking rather than memory, but it seems to me now as I look back upon that long succession of classrooms extending through the years that each one was a novel experiment, not to be solved by any twenty-year-old or ten-year-old or even one-year-old formula, but by some brand-new adventure; and each student in each new classroom was a unique individual with a shell around him which I must somehow break through.

As I read that long sentence over, I seem to be suggesting that those students were nuts, and undoubtedly some of them were, at least for a time; and perhaps so too was their preceptor and guide.

One experiment I think worked especially well, but it was begun near the end of my teaching days, and unless I issued a command, and I did not believe in commands, I could not persuade others to adopt it. I had been especially concerned about the vast difference which existed, in a freshman classroom, between those with the highest level of intelligence and those with the least; also the vast difference between those with the best high school training and those with the worst. A teacher had to use different vocabularies to reach the minds of both, in the same classroom hour. So I resolved to throw the best ones out of that classroom (without consulting the Dean) and devote all my attention to the others.

What was to be done with the brainiest and best prepared ones? I released them from class attendance, and in return required them to get to work on a thesis of their own choosing, which met with my approval, and prepare with the aid of a library assistant a bibliography of source-material. Each Thursday afternoon they met in my office for an hour, and each reported to me and the rest of the group what he had read in the past few days, and then read aloud a brief extract from what he had written. In carrying out this program each one of them was teaching the others as well as himself. I know the plan worked well from the start, because of the eagerness with which they listened to the work of their fellows.

But I met with one unexpected bit of trouble at the start. One of the lads who came to me to discuss his choice of subject explained that he was a Catholic, and had had little contact with Protestant school companions up to this time, and he was curious to know what they believed. So he wanted to write a thesis comparing the different positions of the two faiths.

I pictured myself summoned to an interview with irate parents and a harassed President or Dean, and being forced to explain why I was compelling a Catholic student to read a lot of books on Protestantism. So I hedged, - or should I say I passed the buck? I told the lad that I did not feel free to approve his choice until he brought me a note from his Father Confessor also approving. To my great relief the boy came to me in a few days with a note from the priest, who had written, "Let the boy read anything he wants, for the purpose you have in mind. I am sure his faith is strong enough to prevent any harm." I have always wanted to meet that reverend Father.

It is difficult in this over-crowded age to deal with students as individuals; and education is an individual process. Teaching students in job-lots handicaps the teacher as well as the student. Almost the worst enemy of education today is the classroom itself, with its regimented chairs and blackboards, its roll-calls and its bells signaling time to begin and time to finish. If chairs can be pulled up by their roots and arranged in a circle, then any student who speaks is addressing an audience of his fellows as well as his teacher.

Visiting one college after another and being invited to visit classrooms is a revealing experience. In one type of classroom one faces rows of utterly blank faces, cow-like in their expressions, some of them actually chewing their cuds. Or else antagonistic resistant faces, seeming to say, "Learn me something, I dare you!

Then, unexpectedly, at some neighboring institution, the classroom expressions are expectant, alert, and friendly. An invitation to ask questions brings a quick response, and opinions are challenged in friendly argument.

How does one brew a classroom atmosphere?

Burges Johnson

In **The New York Times Magazine** for Sept. 16 Burges Johnson has a feature article in which he says that what our classrooms need is a booklist seasoned with some laughter. A note about the author identifies him as a former editor, teacher, writer and lecturer who helped found the CEA.

Majors and Non-Majors

It is not just loyalty to my friend and collaborator John Ball which moves me to offer some observations in rejoinder to Paul Odell Clark's "I Beg to Disagree" in the April, 1956 CEA Critic. I believe the kind of soul-searching fostered by such a controversy as we have going here may prove a lifesaver for our profession at a time when college English teachers are being looked at askance more and more and the survival of English departments as such is being seriously called into question.

Fewer Majors

The time may be nearer than we think when we will either have to justify ourselves or get out, for the increasing crowding of curriculums is putting heavy pressure on all humanities courses, and especially on the ones whose accomplishments are as vague and hard to measure as those in English composition and literature. As college enrollments increase, English majors decline. Full statistics are hard to come by, but the fact is facing all of us.

At my own institution, we will confer baccalaureate degrees on 1,219 students in the 1956 spring commencement. Of the 226 in the School of Arts and Sciences, geology has 36 majors, chemistry 16, zoology 16, psychology 12, music 11, art 9, and English 8! Once, I understand, English majors ran as high as 20 per cent of the total in many institutions. Here we now have less than 1 per cent of the total graduating class and only about 3½ per cent of those in Arts and Sciences. A male English major has become almost a rarity. If English majors continue to dwindle, to whom but non-majors can Professor Clark or anyone else hope to teach courses in English literature in the near future — or any literature, for that matter?

What Are We Good For?

I believe we college teachers of English are called on today to consider seriously whether, allowed to follow our own inclinations, we really are good for much in modern society. I am asking questions, more than trying to answer them. It could be that I am rationalizing as much as anything. Twenty-three years ago, I was awarded a hard-earned Ph.D. degree in English, with American literature specialization. At the time I was hoping for a professorship in American literature, and I expected to teach English majors. In those depression days, however, jobs of any sort were hard to come by. Even yet, I have not found the professorship of American literature, and now no longer expect to. Instead, through the years I have accepted the varied teaching assignments that have come my way, and have tried to be of some use in society.

This personal testimony may seem irrelevant, but I do not believe it is. I am trying to say that many members of our profession have been assuming that our freedom to choose what we will emphasize has been much greater than the realities warrant. This self-delusion has caused us to jeopardize what standing our department has had. Professor Clark says, "I intend as long as I can to continue reading English literature in the full confidence that its values are the perdurable ones." He also says that he hopes "this attitude is brave, not stubborn." I am afraid it is stubborn, not particularly brave, and most unwise.

American society does not want so much English literature in college curriculums as we have been trying to keep there. Why should it? Surely by now we are no longer a colonial nation. The United States of America contains about 60 per cent of the English-speaking people of the world, four times the population of England. Our national literature is nearly two centuries old and as a major literature is in its fifth generation. This literature, to be sure, is written in English, but American English has been different enough to require a four-volume supplement to the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, and our racial origins are probably less than half English. In 1950, with mass immigration long past and ports of entry dismantled, we still had more than 10 million foreign-born citizens, of whom fewer than 1 million were whom fewer than one million were Wales.

Change Our Emphasis!

Can we continue the present emphasis on English literature and at the same time halt and reverse the decline of English majors? I do not believe we can, nor do I believe that the perdurable values which Professor Clark believes peculiar to English literature are actually so; I think we can find them also in our native literature and in translations of the literatures of those countries other than England which have given us large portions of our populations and thereby many of our interests, ideals, and traditions. I do not advocate dropping English literature —I yield to few in my admiration for and enjoyment of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and a number of more recent English authors— but I do advise paying more attention to the non-major student and his needs, both in literature and in the broad and varied realm of written communications. As we do this, some important differences between majors and non-majors will diminish, and the field of English (whatever the department may eventually come to be called) will command more respect.

After all, a good man is a good man anywhere. In one Introduction to Poetry class my best student was a Forestry major; in a Creative Writing course, the finest sonnets were written by a Mechanical Engineer; currently, one of my best students in the American Novel is a Zoology major. Occasionally we see an English major become a public relations director, a college president, or a governor —but not often enough. English majors, as students, teachers, or members of society at large, need not be Lesser Things; but I am afraid they often are, and will continue to be unless they learn to face realities.

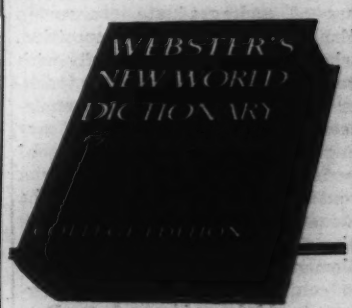
Cecil B. Williams
Oklahoma A. & M. College

Liberal Arts for Professional Women: The Vassar Institute

From August 5 - 19 The Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, in cooperation with Vassar College and the National Secretaries Association, conducted a residential program to "provide an opportunity for business and professional women to enjoy the fruits of a liberally educative experience, specially created to develop within them a greater capacity to enjoy learning."

This experimental program, among the advisors and sponsors for which was Maxwell H. Goldberg, CEA's Executive Director, was based on the assumption that "individuals who have been well trained and highly experienced in their professions or in skills necessary to their life's work can benefit greatly from a liberal arts education which follows specialized training and some years of experience on the job."

The Institute was a notable development in the growing movement toward making the liberal arts available to increased numbers of people, for it was the first time that such a specific liberal arts program had been attempted solely for business women. "If the liberal arts in adult life are good for men, they ought to be equally valuable for women. The rewards are many ... not only to the student herself, but to her company and to the community in which she works."



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THE CEA NEWS LETTER
A COMMEMORATIVE REPRINTING OF SELECTED ARTICLES FROM VOL. I, NUMBERS 1 & 2 SCHENECTADY, N. Y. JUNE 1939

A Letter and Its Reply

April 18, 1939

To the Executive Committee of the Modern Language Association

Gentlemen:

Last December approximately 300 college teachers of English assembled and voted by a large majority in favor of organization. In their resolution the phrase "independent organization" was carefully avoided in order to leave their representatives free to discuss the possibilities and advantages of operating autonomously within the Modern Language Association or the National Council of Teachers of English. The small group responsible for bringing this first meeting about was asked to continue as a steering committee until some formal organization could be perfected.

This organization now formally exists, operating under officers pro tem. The enrolled membership now includes representatives from a few more than 100 colleges and universities throughout the country. These members have already expressed the hope that whether or not their organization continues an independent existence it should arrange to meet at a time and a place which would make attendance at MLA meetings possible; and that there be the greatest possible degree of collaboration. But they are primarily interested in classroom teaching of literature and composition, and in criticism and appreciation.

I am directed to ask you whether you would welcome the collaboration of such a group, a great proportion of whose members are also members of MLA; or whether you would propose to us some method whereby we might become an autonomous body within the MLA. Your action on this question will be reported at once to our membership.

In attempting to anticipate possible questions, I add the following facts. It is our intention to elect permanent officers as soon as possible; machinery for the selection of a nominating committee is now in operation. A second committee will draft a permanent constitution for the consideration of our members, emphasis being placed upon simplicity of organization and limitation of numbers to those actually teaching English to undergraduates. Because of the interest in this organization shown by Mr. John Erskine, Mrs. Hervey Allen, and other teachers who are now writers, we shall gladly provide for such membership.

Finally, it seems appropriate to say that Dr. Robert Gay and myself, who have borne the brunt of the organizing effort, greatly desire to withdraw from leadership when the organization is either operating under its own steam or is an autonomous part of some larger society. Its continuance seems inevitable, and the letters now coming to us from many parts of the country expressing thanks and offering aid and encouragement are most rewarding; but we hope to see younger men at the helm.

May I personally express thanks for your courtesy in lending the facilities of your office to us, so that this inquiry might be sent to you in time for your meeting; and add the request that you grant me a few moments to appear before your committee in order to answer briefly any question that might immediately arise.

Very sincerely yours,
Burges Johnson
For the C.E.T.A.

Announcement by M.L.A.

June, 1939

The following announcement appears in the May issue of the Publications of the Modern Language Association:

4. COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION. — With this provisional name an association is being formed, primarily for teachers of undergraduate courses in English literature and composition, who are not concerned chiefly with research on the one hand, or teacher training on the other. Committees of the association are now engaged in preparing a slate of permanent officers, in drafting a constitution for submission to the membership, and outlining some plan for regional meetings to supplement the annual meeting held in conjunction with MLA. Inquiries should be addressed to Professor Robert Gay, of Simmons College, Boston, or to Professor Burges Johnson, of Union College, Schenectady, New York. The annual dues ($1.00) may be sent to the pro tem treasurer, Professor W. R. Richardson, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

The Council has voted to extend to this association the same courtesies for associated meetings which have been extended to associations of teachers in the foreign languages.

Why Not Samson Agonistes?

I know of no survey text which includes a masterpiece which has always commanded the admiration of my students. When the makers of anthologies can find room for "Volpone" and even for Dryden's "All for Love," why should "Samson Agonistes" be overlooked?

Students can easily find interest in tracing the parallels between the story of Samson and the life of Milton—blindness, marital difficulties, political disappointment. One can thus introduce them to some of the critical problems of the reflection of personality in art and the biographical approach to literature.

The figure of Milton, disappointed in age, his political principles renounced by the nation, cannot fail to awaken the sympathies of students. Who in this decade does not appreciate the problems of the political exile? The manly optimism which was Milton's is also a challenge to human idealism. Many of my students have been drawn from their unthinking adulation of the contemporary by discovering that Milton's attitude toward adversity is more heroic than the fatalism of most modern writers.

Suggest the play to your students, then, even if it involves the inconvenience of relying on library copies! In the matter of purely aesthetic appeal, you will find it valuable as an example of the stately dignity of classical tragedy, a form otherwise not familiar in English literature. The style, more conversational than that of "Paradise Lost," is noble and effective, the plot is simple in structure, yet has its more profound overtones in the significance of Samson's three temptations. Finally, the play contains the beautiful expression of the mood of tragic resignation in the final speech of Samson's aged father, and the lines of the closing chorus constitute the finest expression in literature of the emotional effect of tragedy.

Richard M. Kain,
Ohio Wesleyan University

"I am entirely opposed to the study of Middle English in translation. To learn enough Middle English to read Chaucer is so slight a matter that it seems to me entirely mollycoddling to let students read it in translation."

Henry Noble MacCracken,
Vassar College.

Brief, constructive, thought-stimulating contributions to an October issue are in order. Three hundred words are golden, five hundred are silver, - and a thousand might be crowded out.

THE REWARDS OF TEACHING

There were days when it went well in the classroom.
I knew something done against darkness, I could tell
That the twenty minds were one.
There were other days when too much morning sun
Filled the high windows, and springtime sky and trees
Called all away, and none of us could go.
Was it one of these?
Is it any time that teachers know?
Some of the thousand hours were quick with love
I can tell you nothing of.
There were also days when I brought to class
A hurt that would not stay at home along
With heart like a stone
In a coat-pocket, I stood for an hour, and taught.
There were days when half a thought
Was all you got, and all I had to give.
Now you come saying that as long as you may live
You'll never forget
Something I said in class that helps you even yet.
Why? When? What was I thinking then?
I know it is the sort of thing to say.
But of all my days for you, upon which day?

- John Holmes
Tufts College

We are indebted to Burges Johnson for collecting and arranging these extracts from the CEA News Letter.

Literae Humaniores

Dear Mr. Gay:

I wish to say very heartily that I think an organization devoted to the liberal, cultural, and humanistic aspects of the teaching of English literature is very much needed. As to whether a new journal would be founded or whether an existing one could be made to meet the needs of the situation we can soon learn by experience.

It has for many years been my feeling that the English teachers in this country were too narrowly devoted to problems of technique and too blind to the broader implications of English literature and its ramifications in the fields of Philosophy and History. I tried to express this in an article ("English as Humane Letters"), printed in the **Atlantic Monthly**, September 1914, and reprinted in a little book of mine called **The Oxford Stamp.**

My own view as to the scope of the organization you could gather from that article. I should like to base the study of English in this country on the School of Literae Humaniores at Oxford, and I think that if we could do that, we would give our Departments of English Literature a dignity and influence which they have never had.

I have great respect for philologists and for Philology as a science, and I admire the heroic efforts of the teachers of English Composition, though I must say that I think the results are singularly meager in proportion to the efforts expended. Neither group, however, has seemed to me to meet the humanistic and cultural needs of the subject.

I hope you will keep me informed of the results of your discussion with other people and the progress of your plans. I should very much like to see such an association as you have in mind.

Frank Aydelotte,
Swarthmore College

No college can train a student to be a writer merely by dragging him into a classroom for a few hours every week. The so-called student must do a lot of reading on the side and he must read something besides "Ballyhoo," "College Humor" and "True Stories." He should read Robert Louis Stevenson, Cardinal Newman, Abraham Lincoln, Walter Pater, Addison, and even Macaulay and Mencken. . . . The first thing a young writer needs to learn is that literature is not scroll work. He must avoid reading trash and associate with a few masters of English and he should persistently attempt to express himself on paper.

Part of a Letter from George Ade

Publication is vexation and printing drives us mad; nevertheless our members continue to yearn for some periodical medium for the wider dissemination of addresses and other learned articles. The very nature of the NEWS LETTER calls for brevity. The concentrated essence of ideas is what it feeds upon, and it holds out small comfort to the wandering dissertation or thesis which has been seeking some rotary-press whereon to rest its weary bones. Yet it is possible that CEA might find a way to render even that service by developing the suggestion offered us by John Erskine.

Why not a series of eight or ten or a dozen monographs published in leaflet form throughout the year? One can visualize an editorial committee of three or four members whose task it would be to select the best of submitted papers, avoiding the dry-as-dust variety, - perhaps even suggesting desirable subject-matter to members notable for special knowledge or abilities. These monographs published in a modest but attractive uniform style, and numbered consecutively, could be priced at ten or fifteen cents per copy, and orders for them could be filled at any time. Some members or some libraries might even wish to subscribe for the set by payment in advance. If there were a deficit at the end of the year in the cost of publication, that would be smaller than the deficit for a standard-sized magazine underwritten by CEA, and no member need purchase more of these scholarly articles than he cared to read.

Fragments from Two Letters

I have pretty nearly given up trying to define "good writing," for it seems to me, after a somewhat extended attempt to learn, that I don't know much about it. A large part of the poor writing I see - and, O Lord, much that I saw during the years when I sat in an editorial office - is due to the fact that the writer has nothing to say. He had really nothing to say out of his own life, his own individuality, his own thought, his own passion. He is trying to give us something, or sell us something, that he has himself had out of books or magazines or newspapers. As a reader I can stand poor mechanics of expression if I am really getting something; I can be happy if the words are also correctly spelled, and the infinitives are on bowing terms.

Ray Stannard Baker.

My dear Editor:

Like Mr. Canby, I do not believe in courses in contemporary literature, and for just the reasons which he advances, namely:

> "I think that the material is still too untested for satisfactory teaching, and that the very large majority of teachers are not sufficiently in the atmosphere of the writing world to interpret and discriminate in any definite way."

But I am afraid you will not think me very obliging if I merely quote Mr. Canby — you will think I am taking a very easy way of replying to your question.

I have also other reasons. In the first place, most American boys are hurried into active life so early, that even the few who have the possibility of developing literary taste have scarcely time to do so. Unless they read the great English classics in high school and in college, they never find time to read them. And that means that in their maturity they have no background. By "classics" I certainly do not mean rather special things like the works of Sir Thomas Browne or DeQuincy, but the great books that still influence the life and thought and standards of the English speaking peoples. Within the last five years, for example, an amazing number of quotations from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets have been pertinently used in the editorial columns of the **New York Times** and the **New York Herald Tribune.** In each case the editor used them not to exhibit his knowledge, but to drive home his point. I think we should all, in our school days, be given a chance at Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, Jane Austen - coming down as late as Thackery, George Eliot, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. I don't mean tthat "Macbeth" or "The Egoist" or "Henry Esmond" can be "taught" at all. I mean that the students can be "exposed," so to speak, to the classics. If the germ "takes," even in very few, it will develop, and give them a great deal of pleasure in life. And those who do not catch the infection will certainly not be at all harmed.

As regards contemporary literature, the work of living authors, I think young people should be allowed to discover for themselves what they like. For young people, half the pleasure of reading new books is in finding them out for themselves. If a boy goes quite wild about a very silly new book, his teacher can never convince him that it is not good. If he finds a really good one out for himself, it counts with him for a great deal more than if he had been told he must read it. No book can be called a "classic" until it is a hundred years old, surely. How many so-called "classics" have you seen die in your own lifetime, Mr. Johnson? A fine taste for literature is largely a matter of the ear, and is as rare as absolute pitch in music. But a great many boys and girls can enjoy a great play like "Julius Caesar" because of its relation to life, and they do get something out of the power and beauty of the lines.

While I do not believe that English literature can be "taught" in the sense that Latin can be taught, I know from experience that an instructor who is really steeped in his subject, who loves both literature and life, can, by merely expressing his own honest enthusiasm, or his honest objections, have a great influence on young people.

Willa Cather.

When Autumn's winds denude the grove,
I seek my lecture where it lurks
'Mid the unpublished portion of
My works,
And ponder, while its sheets I scan
How many years away have slipt
Since first I penned that ancient man
U-script.
I know thee well-nor can mistake
The old accustomed pencil stroke
Denoting where I mostly make
A joke, -
Or where coy brackets signify
Those echoes faint of ancient wit
Which, if a lady's present, I
Omit.
Though Truth enlarge her widening range,
And knowledge be with time increased,
Yet thou, my Lecture, does not change
The least,
But fixed immutable amidst
The advent of a newer lore,
Maintainest calmly what thou didst
Before.
Once more for intellectual food
Thou'lt serve: an added phrase or two
Will make thee really just as good
As new:
And listening crowds, that throng the spot,
True Learning's cup intent to drain,
Will cry "The old familiar rot
Again!"

from "The Oxford Magazine"
Vol. 1. No. 3, Dec. 1939

TEN PERCENT for ENGLISH

(Continued from Page 1)

meaning of a work, to relish the experience he has undergone in reading it. He devotes little interest to that which absorbs so much of the writer's time and energy: techniques of expression, diction, sentence construction, phrasing.

Writing, for the English teacher, is, in other words, not a craft, but "literature," the exalted expression of a superior mind. Enjoyment of literature has been in his life a continually enriching experience. His aim and desire is to initiate others into the joys and rewards of reading. It is certainly a worthwhile aim, and not always an easy or rewarding undertaking. But introducing students to literature does not teach them how to write. It may stimulate their thinking, which is important; it may inspire them to written expression, which is also important; but it does not provide them with the mechanics and techniques of writing they require.

The Remedy: First Step

There is only one way to rectify this situation. We, in the colleges, must make what we now call composition courses actually composition courses. For a generation or two, until college graduates have seen to it that their students and their children are properly trained in the preliminary schools, college composition courses should offer a thorough study of grammar and punctuation. They should present an introduction to semantics, provide essays that, besides being intellectually stimulating, serve as models of style, of diction, of organization, of sentence structure and variety. The courses should include the analysis not of fiction, but of a few poems, to teach the power of language, concreteness, discipline, and precision of utterance. The weekly themes should be technical exercises mercilessly corrected by the instructor.

Such a course would not be deadly; it would not be boring to the students. Ingenuity in classroom techniques would be required, but the enthusiasm and interest of students in any subject, as any teacher knows, have their origin in the instructor. When we are annoyed by the attitude of students toward the mechanics of writing, we are merely being confronted with the gross expression of our own attitudes. Actually, students, who have been imbued with a sense of awe for literature, are happy and eager to get some concrete knowledge about the craft of writing which they can understand and put to use to improve their own work.

The Remedy: Second Step

But changing our attitudes and revamping our courses would not provide the incentive our students require to learn correct expression. They must be given tangible evidence of the necessity for facility in writing. Only if they are forced to write well in their other courses will they recognize the importance of English Composition.

The day that colleges institute a program requiring every professor in every department to reserve ten percent of the students' grades on every report or examination (wherever practicable) for good English, on that day can the administrators remove English Composition from the list of required courses, and on that day can the faculty look forward to graduating articulate students who will not, in a few years, feel ashamed because they cannot write a decent sentence. The argument that students, brilliant in a particular subject, should not be penalized because they are unable to write effective English is sentimental and superficial. To be worth anything to society, a brilliant student will have to articulate his ideas. By denying him the technical knowledge he needs to express those ideas we cheat him of the education he deserves. If colleges instituted a program reserving ten percent of the student's grade for English, high school administrators whose job it is to make sure their students are prepared for college would very quickly follow suit.

College English teachers have too long been equivocating about a situation that requires action. We should face our responsibilities, admit to ourselves that we are teachers of writing (until we move on to literature courses), and, with the help of the other departments in the college, begin to teach writing.

Edmond L. Volpe
The City College of New York

THE EMPORER JONES and ARISTOTLE

(Continued from Page 1)

of an unimportant island — is this the sort of character to symbolize the precarious hold of the human race on its life and fortune, to suggest its doubtful doom? He is not ostensibly the aristocratic man suggested by Aristotle for such a protagonist.

Yet it is not necessary to suppose that Aristotle meant to lay down a prescription binding for all time. He hardly needed to do so. With no Freud, no Jung, no daily psychiatric columnist for his mentor, he performed a sufficient miracle in defining the nature and function of the tragic spectacle. Criticism could hardly ask a more remarkable feat of psychological and esthetic insight. In any case, whatever Aristotle intended, modern literature has amply demonstrated that his formula is too rigid, that the tragic effect is to be had in plays which do not wholly conform to it.

Brutus Jones, who became the Emperor, possesses qualities traditionally attributed to heroes. He is not submissive; he is the man who kills the brutal overseer. He is the man with the resourcefulness to file off his chains, to laugh at the bloodhounds, to establish his own dominance over the brutish islanders whose language he does not know, to become for those people the man immune to ordinary weapons, whom only a silver bullet can kill — and where are they to get silver bullets, if they dared? He has the audacity to maintain his rule in spite of malice and intrigue and constant danger, to maintain it with an air of jauntiness. Contrasted with the shifty and sniveling Smithers, Jones is the man of strength, the man for whom, as Smithers perceives, only the silver bullet is appropriate. And he resolutely plays out his game to the end.

The great man is the one whom we like to have speak for the human race; it is the great man whose overwhelming by the perils that beset mankind is most moving. Had Smithers succumbed to superstition and his own inability to cope with adverse destiny, we should never feel that his catastrophe symbolized our possible own. We should doubtless feel some degree of commiseration, but fate could have only a mean triumph in destruction of the inconsiderable Smithers. There would have been no question as to whether he was a tragic character. We should never conceive of ourselves as possibly standing in his place. It is Jones, in this society, who speaks for us as we might like to believe ourselves capable of speaking if we had been in his circumstances, starting where he started.

Even so, is Jones a man of stature in the human race or only in a race of porters and convicts, cockney traders, and superstitious natives of an unknown island?

A degree of snobbish arrogance subsists, perhaps, in the question; but it is pertinent to the matter in hand. Societies have existed, no doubt, in which it would not have been asked, the answer appearing too obvious. Perhaps there are persons who would not ask it now. For those persons Brutus Jones is no tragic character, no vicar in their possible doom. Yet I believe that one of the minute advances which the race has made toward understanding itself is to be discerned in an increased awareness of the brotherhood of man which is not only common but pervasive — a greater awareness than has existed in most of man's history.

It has been suggested that the Emperor possessed qualities long regarded as those of heroes, in both primitive and developed cultures, — courage, resourcefulness,

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a sort of breadth of imagination, and the will not to submit. If his weaknesses of superstition and formless fears were instrumental in his destruction, so were other heritages from the past of his race as well as from his own past. Of the phantasms upon which he wasted the bullets that might have preserved him, two were out of his own past — the man with the dice, and the overseer. Two were from the past of his race — the slave auction and the Congo witch doctor calling on the crocodile god. On the last he expended the silver bullet which might have kept his catastrophe from becoming absolute.

Now, what race or culture can boast itself free of its formless fears, of the specters of its own past, of the ancestral phantasms of its prehistoric antiquity? In one shape or another they haunt us all, and in times of destiny they imperil us all. We share in and are subject to a common humanity. And if modern psychology has not taught us, in case we did not already know, how much of the ancient beast is in us, the events of our own generation might have hinted at how thin is the crust between civilization and savagery.

It is perhaps not too important that the Emperor Jones is not what would generally be called a good man. One might argue that power rather than virtue makes the tragic hero, but one need not argue so. Good is, after all, a shifting and relative concept. If one imagines himself starting where the Emperor Jones started, standing where he stood, one will not in that sympathy feel too poignant a guilt at having used a razor in a difference of opinion over the dice. It is not virtue that makes a convict submit to the lash of a guard. It is lack of opportunity or, worse, lack of spirit. The man who strikes murderously back is, in his own mind at least, a man properly resisting an indignity. Killing the oppressor has been the act of a hero in the world's sagas, from time immemorial. Opportunism on the island — where would the conscience of Brutus Jones have learned to reproach him? He is no base man. And the spectator so far identifies himself with the Emperor as not to be repelled from sympathy by moral judgments concerning the events in that past on the Pullmans or in the chain gang.

In my judgment we do, to a considerable degree, merge our own existence with that of the Emperor and await the impending catastrophe with a tension of mind which springs from our sympathy with him. Not that we reason out our common humanity; we never do so where our emotions are engaged. We feel it, immediately and unreflectively, as unreflectively as we let the tom-tom's imperceptibly accelerating pace intensify our sense of imminent doom. And to the extent that we do so the Emperor is a tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense. In the play other reasons are to be found for interest, of course, but in my judgment the basic reason for the effect it produces is that, in spite of whatever of the bizarre is in it, it is true tragedy.

If this judgment is valid, one may wonder whether the creator of the Emperor Jones was deliberately writing Aristotelian tragedy with characters of the most improbable sort. I do not know, and my conjectures are of no interest. While my own admiration of Eugene O'Neill keeps well this side idolatry — he often annoys me, though not in this play — one does not assert too recklessly that a maker is unaware of what he is doing. It is quite as possible, however, for a writer to achieve effects beyond his intentional contriving as it is for a reader or a spectator to respond beyond his own analysis. Yet the analysis has its importance if we are to understand either our art or ourselves, particularly when as in this play, I submit, the effectiveness of the art goes far beyond what its materials would have seemed to render probable.

E. L. Jacobs
Franklin College

for better expression

WORDS: HOW TO KNOW THEM — MATHEWS

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Report Of CEA Nominating Committee

In accordance with the By-Laws, the 1956 Nominating Committee makes nominations as follows: (1) a single slate for President; (2) a single slate for "Second Vice-President" to serve for two years; (3) a multiple slate of five names for Directors, of whom three will be elected by mailed ballots; and (4) a single slate of three names for next year's Nominating Committee.

In addition, there is a provision that extra names may be added to the ballot for Directors and Nominating Committeemen by petition signed by ten members. These petitions must be in by Oct. 22. In accordance with these specifications, the Nominating Committee proposes the following candidates:

For President

Harry R. Warfel, Professor of English, Univ. of Florida; Fulbright Award lecturer in American Studies at Univ. of Marburg; Sterling Research Fellow at Yale; author, co-author, and editor of sixteen books, including "American Novelists of Today" and "American English in its Cultural Setting" (with Donald J. Lloyd); General Editor of Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints; committee memberships for UNESCO, USAFI, NCTE, MLA, CEA; charter member, Middle Atlantic CEA; General Chairman, 1953 CEA Institute; Director and First Vice-President CEA.

For Vice-President

George F. Horner, B.A. (1921), M.A. (1924), The Pennsylvania State University; Ph.D. (1938), The University of North Carolina. Instructor in English, The Pennsylvania State University, 1921-24; Graduate Study, University of London, 1924; Graduate Study, Harvard University, 1925 - 26; Graduate Assistant, Teaching Fellow, Instructor in English, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Director of Freshman - Sophomore English, The University of North Carolina, 1927 to Present. Assistant Editor, SAMLA Bulletin, 1936-46; President, Virginia-West Virginia-North Carolina CEA, 1952.

For Directors

Carl Bode, Ph.B., Univ. of Chicago, 1933; M.A., Northwestern, 1938, fellow, 1940-41, Ph.D. 1941. Assistant Professor English, Keuka College, 1941-43; Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1946-47; Prof. English, Univ. of Maryland since 1947. Executive Sect. Am. Civilization Program since 1950. Fellow, Ford Foundation, 1952-53; Newberry Library, summer 1954; Guggenheim Foundation, 1954-55. First President, American Studies Association, 1952. President Middle Atlantic section of CEA, 1951-52. Author, The Sacred Seasons, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind. Editor, Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau, The Portable Thoreau. Co-editor, American Heritage, The Thoreau Correspondence (1957).

Clyde E. Henson, B.A., B. Ed., M. A., M.F.A., Ph.D. Studied at Washington Univ., Southern Ill. Univ., State Univ. of Iowa, American Academy, Western Reserve, Rome, Cambridge. Vice-President, Michigan CEA, 1955-56; Detroit Edison Scholarship, 1952, 1953; Standard Oil of Ohio Fellowship, 1956; Rockefeller Mid-Western Fellowship, 1950-51; Three All-College Research Grants (M.S.U.), Executive Associate, CEAI, 1951-56. Articles in American Literature, Southern Folklore, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Folklore. Collaborated in preparation of the five-volume Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson. Collaborated with G. W. Smith in Lincoln in Egypt.

Patrick G. Hogan, Jr., Associate Prof. of English, Mississippi State College; attended Miss. State, Univ. of Miss., Vanderbilt; faculty positions at Univ. of Miss., Vanderbilt, Cumberland Univ., Delta State College. Member CEA, AAUP, ASA, MLA, Ren. Soc. of Am., Ling. Soc. of Am., Charter Member, South - Central CEA, Secretary 1954-55, President, 1955-

(Please Turn To Page 8)

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Report of CEA Nom. Com.

(Continued From Page 7)

56. President, Miss. Assn. of English Teachers, 1955-57. Staff, Lansing CEA Institute, 1954; CEA Hdq. staff, Chicago, 1955. Member CEA National-Regional Relations Committee.

Merrill Patterson, B.S. Wesleyan, A.M. Brown, Ph.D. Yale. Faculty positions, Wesleyan, Connecticut College for Women, Marietta College, Hillyer. Dean of Marietta since 1948. Member of MLA, NCTE, CEA. Contributor to Dictionary of American Biography, Rhode Island Historical Collections. President of Ohio CEA and Academic Chairman, Ohio Committee for the CEA Institute.

Donald A. Sears, Associate Prof. of English and Director of Freshman English, Upsala College. Harvard Ph.D. Faculty position at Dartmouth College. Member CEA, MLA, AAUP, ASA. Past President, Greater New York CEA. Staff member, CEA Institutes. Author of **Harbrace Guide to the Library and the Research Paper.**

For the Nominating Committee

James P. McCormick (for Chairman), Ph.D. Northwestern Univ., Lecturer, Alborz College, Teheran, Iran, 1937-38. 1938-56, Instructor to Associate Professor, Wayne State University. 1954-55, Fulbright Professor, Japan. **As a Flame Springs,** Scribners. **Seven Plays of the Modern Theater,** American Book (with Vincent Wall). 1953-54, Foundation for the Advancement of Education Fellowship. Member CEA and Michigan CEA. Staff member, Corning CEA Institute, Univ of Florida CEA Institute. Chairman, CEA Committee on International English Studies.

Charles W. Cooper, Professor, Whittier College. A.B., U.C.L.A.; M.A. and Ph.D. Univ of California, Berkeley. Textbooks include **The Term Paper** (with Robins), **Designing the Play** (with Camp), **Preface to Poetry** (with John Holmes), **The Arts and Humanity, The Letter Writer** (with Mrs. Cooper), **Preface to Drama.** Former Director of CEA, member of By-Laws Committee, active in California CEA.

Charles M. Clark, Professor at The American University, A.B., M.A. Ph.D. from Cornell. Teaching positions at Cornell and American Univ., member MLA, CEA, NCTE, AAUP. Program Chairman, Middle Atlantic CEA, 1954. Vice-President 1955, President 1956.

Respectfully submitted,
John W. Ball (Miami), Chairman
Ernest E. Leisy (SMU)
Harry T. Moore (Babson Institute)

Regional Meetings

California: Oct. 27 at UCLA. Program Chairman, William G. Stryker, Univ. of Redlands. Chairman of local arrangements, Blake Nevius, UCLA.

Greater New York: Nov. 3, at the Museum of Modern Art. Professor Houston Peterson, Rutgers, will speak on "Eloquence in the Classroom." Weller Embler of Cooper Union is Program Chairman.

Michigan: Oct. 27 at Wayne University. Arthur Eastmen of the Univ. of Mich. is Program Chairman.

New England: Oct. 27 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Carvel Collins is in charge.

N.C.-Va.-W.Va.: Oct. 20 at East Carolina College in Greenville, North Carolina. Edgar W. Hirshberg of East Carolina College will be in charge.

Indiana: Spring meeting will be May 10 and 11, 1957, at Indiana University.

Ohio: Probable date of spring meeting at Ohio State is April 19, 1957. Program Chairman will be Don Keester of Akron Univ.

Pennsylvania-Delaware: Probable date of spring meeting, May 4. Place: Bucknell Univ. P. Burwell Rogers of Buckness will be Program Chairman.

Rocky Mt. CEA: The 1956 RMMLA meeting will be held at the Univ. of Montana, Oct. 19 and 20.

South Central CEA: Fall meeting Nov. 3, in conjunction with South-Central MLA, at Toulane. Program Chairman Patrick G. Hogan, with Rudolph Fiehler as consultant.

Texas: Annual meeting in March, 1957. W. W. Christiansen and Allan MacLain will be co-Chairmen.

Tennesse CEA

The College English Conference at Middle Tennessee State College is now an affiliate of the CEA. Kenneth Knickerbocker, Univ. of Tenn., is President, Richard C. Peck, Univ. of Tenn., is secretary-treasurer, and the advisory board is Byno Rhodes, Lincoln Memorial Univ., Leonard Black, Vanderbilt, H. B. Evans, Memphis State College. The announcement of this affiliation followed Max Goldberg's participation as speaker on the program Sept. 11 and 12, 1956.

Frederick Pamp's article in the **Harvard Business Review** is summarized in "La Voce Dell' America" publication covering a broadcast made on the "Universita' Internazionale G. Marconi," on July 6, 1956. The article is entitled "Cultura Umanistica E Successo del Dirigenta Aziendale Moderno."

In the **Carnegie Alumnus** for March, 1956, an article entitled "The English Professor Goes to Industry," written by two English professors, William M. Schutte and Erwin R. Steinberg, discusses the growing use made by industrial concerns of the talents of English teachers as communications consultants. Group conferences have proved most effective, the article states, in helping technical and business people overcome their communication weaknesses.

John Ciardi's new book of poems, **As If,** is reviewed by John Holmes in the **Tufts Alumni Review** for May, 1956. "Ciardi has sorted out his life," Holmes writes, "and these are the best poems he has written about the named aspects of his life. It is a mid-life report, of great vitality and human warmth, uttered with distinction and honesty. He has learned to see his subject-matter clearly, and to put a form on it with his own art. This is rare, and this rarity is here memorable."

An editorial in **The New York Times** for Sept. 22, 1956, endorses the finding of the Esso research staff that students in technical schools should be taught how to write. "There ought to be instruction in technical schools in the preparation of reports, specifications and articles for engineering magazines—instruction as systematic as that given in the various branches of engineering."

CONCERNING WORDS AND PHRASING, 4th edition

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Temple Univ. Reading Institute

The theme of the Reading Institute of Temple University to be held January 28 - February 1, 1957, will be "Reading Disabilities in the Classroom and Clinic." The Institute will be held in Philadelphia. Inquiries should be sent to E. Elona Sochor, Director, The Reading Clinic, Temple University, Philadelphia 22, Pa.

The **Manual of Technical Writing** by Sypherd, Fountain and Gibbens contains "As Others See Us" from the Sept., 1947 **CEA News Letter,** and Arthur A. Houghton Jr.'s "College English and the Executive Career," from the Nov., 1952 **CEA Critic.**

CEA Appointments Bureau at Washington

December 27 - 29, 1956

The CEA Bureau of Appointments will staff a desk in the interveiw room of the MLA Faculty Exchange (first operated last year). It is hoped that this will make it easier for registrants and prospective employers, and provide closer cooperation with MLA. Present and prospective registrants and employers should advise Albert P. Madeira, Box 472, Amherst, Mass., of their plans to be in Washington. Further details in the next **Critic.**

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